

# REPORT OF ELDERS ORSON PRATT AND JOSEPH F. SMITH.

(Concluded.)

NEW YORK CITY,  
September 17, 1878.  
President John Taylor and Council  
of the Twelve.

On Monday, Sept. 9th, we visited Far West. To convey a proper idea of our visit here, we think we cannot do much better than to give a few extracts from Bro. Smith's Journal: "We halted at the late residence of Mr. John Whitmer, deceased. I got out of the carriage, and went to the house, where I met a man of whom I enquired if Mrs. Johnson was at home, and was informed that she was. I again asked if I could see her, when this individual stepped to the stair door, and called—'Sarah, there is a gentleman here who wants to see you.' While waiting for her, I said to the person before mentioned, 'Is your name Whitmer?' 'Yes sir, my name is Whitmer.' I replied, 'and my name is Smith; I am a native of this place, as I suppose, and I have come here with a friend to take a look—the place of my birth, as I never saw it before to the best of my recollection. Can you provide lodgings for us over night?' Mr. W.—'I don't know; my sister can tell you, when she comes down stairs.' Just then Mrs. Johnson came down. Mr. Whitmer introduced me as Mr. Smith. I asked her about the same as above written. She seemed to hesitate a little, and then said, 'Yes sir, I think we can.' Noticing her hesitancy, I remarked, 'We will go on to Illinois in the morning.' Mrs. J. 'Do you live in Illinois?' I answered, 'No, ma'am, I live in Utah.' At this, she and her brother looked strangely at each other, and then at me. I continued, 'The gentleman that is with me, is Mr. Orson Pratt.' Some more bewildered looks back and forth, but nothing was said for a moment; but presently Mr. Whitmer said to his sister, 'You have heard of Mr. Pratt?' 'Yes,' she replied, 'I heard father speak of him.' Another pause—then she continued addressing her brother, 'I do not know whether we can keep them or not; if those other gentlemen come, we shall be rather crowded.' Here, I remarked, 'We should not like to discommode you too much, but we would be pleased to stop with you, if you have room.' To this, she paid no attention, but suggested to her brother, that 'Mr. Edwards and Mr. Somebody-else always kept strangers when they came along.' Whereupon Mr. Whitmer said 'Yes,' then turning to me, said, 'You can get lodgings at Mr. Edwards' about a mile back on the road.' I made some further enquiry about directions to Mr. Edwards, to which he gruffly replied. Said I, 'I was in hopes, Mr. Whitmer you could have showed us about the place a little, as we are strangers.' To which he replied, 'Well, I haven't time.' Said I, 'Will you go to the carriage and see Mr. Pratt?' Without answering, he started towards the carriage, and I followed. On reaching which, I introduced him to Brother Pratt, who tried to get into conversation with him; but he was insolently gruff and abrupt. Said Brother Pratt kindly, 'I was well acquainted with your father, Jacob Whitmer.' (the name of this excessively polite gentleman.) 'I suppose you was.'

O. P.—Mr. Smith was born here, and would like you to point out the site of the old town, and if you know his father's house, or the spot where it stood.

J. W.—I don't know anything about it; that is, I know where the town was, and where the Temple site is; but I don't know where any person lived. He then pointed down in the field, northward, and continued, 'There was a place over there that some said was the Smith place; there was another place over there, (a little further west,) that some said was the Smith place, but Joe Smith lived over there, beyond that locust grove, just this side of where you see the tops of those tall cottonwoods, near them stacks, there's where Joe Smith lived, and the Temple site is just at the corner of that orchard, just over the fence.'

I pleasantly remarked, 'Have you not enough respect for Joseph Smith to call him by his proper name?'

J. W.—I have no particular respect or disrespect for him; Joe Smith is the name he goes by here.'

I retorted, 'I generally respect all men enough, to call them by their proper names.'

O. P.—We were in hopes you could show us around a little, and point out those places to us.

J. W.—Well, I have not time; anybody here can tell you as much as I can.'

O. P.—Your father was once the historian of the Church, and I am the present historian; we are anxious to preserve all the items of history we can, we would therefore like to see the MS. your father kept, and if possible to make satisfactory arrangements with you, to purchase the same, provided there is anything in the MS which we have not already published. I suppose you are aware that the history of the Church has already been published.

J. W.—We've got no history here, all father's papers have gone to Richmond long ago.

O. P.—We had a very pleasant interview with your uncle David, at Richmond, we arrived there last Friday, and remained two days, he showed us the MS. of the Book of Mormon, but said nothing about having any other papers.

J. W.—We have got no papers here.

Convinced that there was no use of making any further efforts where the spirit of bigotry and opposition was so intense, we turned away satisfied that all will come out right.

After viewing the Temple ground at Far West, we concluded, as it was not yet very late in the evening, to drive on 10 miles further to the town of Cameron, the nearest point to the railroad, where we arrived before dark, making a day's journey of about 48 miles by team. From this place we booked to Quincy, Ill. (Sept. 10th), intending to visit Nauvoo, but on our arrival at Quincy, finding there was no convenient railroad connections to Nauvoo, we concluded to proceed directly to Plano.

Sept. 11th, we took the 5.30 a.m. train at Quincy for Colchester, about 50 miles distant, on our way, by the C. B. & Q. R. R. to Plano and Chicago. At Colchester we had a little over two hours to wait for the next train. We therefore spent the time visiting with the connections of Elder Joseph F. Smith. We found Mrs. Lucy Milliken, the youngest sister of the Prophet Joseph, her husband, Mr. Arthur Milliken, and their family, mostly in good health. Arthur and Lucy Milliken have eight children, one son and three daughters married, and one daughter and three sons living with their parents. We met with several of these, and also with the only daughter and granddaughter of Mrs. Sophronia Stoddard, who was the eldest sister of the Prophet. She is now dead. They were surprised and pleased to see us, earnestly requesting us to call again on our return.

We reached Plano the same evening; called at the house of Joseph Smith, president of the 'Reorganized Church,' and found that he was absent attending a protracted meeting or conference at Galland's Grove, Lee County, Iowa.

On the morning of September 12, we called again at Mr. Smith's and had a very pleasant visit with his wife and her father, an old-time Mormon, a native of Scandinavia, by the name of Mads Madson. After this we called at the printing and publishing office of the 'Reorganized Church,' where we met Mr. John Scott, foreman of the printing office, Mr. I. N. W. Cooper, accountant and book-keeper of the institution, Mr. Harvey Dille and others. To these gentlemen we made some reference to the nature of our business, and found that they were already posted in relation to it. As they could do nothing in the premises however in the absence of Joseph Smith, they desired that we should remain until after the conference was over and Mr. Smith's return, which we could not promise to do on uncertainty as to the time of his coming. They therefore concluded to telegraph him and await his answer.

They sent the following telegram:

'Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt here, wish to examine the MS. of the new translation. When can you come? Is MS. here?'

They expected an answer about 3 p.m., but none came. We waited until the next morning, when we were informed that a postal card had been received, announcing that the conference would be continued over the following Sunday. We therefore concluded to come on,

(leaving with them our address at New York City) and upon our receiving information that the MS. was at Plano, and could be seen, in time, one or both of us would call on our return. Messrs. Cooper and Scott were very anxious to have us preach. Mr. C. offered to advertise us, by printing hand bills and posting them in the windows of the stores, shops and houses about town, but we respectfully declined for reasons that we did not explain to him, and it is perhaps not necessary to state them here. They urged us to attend their prayer meeting on the evening of the 12th. To this we of course consented. Soon after we sat down in the meeting house, Mr. Dille, the presiding officer of the meeting, came to us and urged us to occupy the time. He said, 'this is a prayer meeting, and I have no right to change it, but many have expressed a wish to hear you and we would like very much for you to accept our invitation.' Elder Pratt replied, if it is the wish of all, I have no objections. Mr. Dille then called a vote which was unanimous; and after the meeting was opened we were invited to the stand. Elder Pratt then gave a plain, simple narration of his early experience in the Church, relating many interesting incidents connected with its rise; explained the circumstances under which several revelations were received by Joseph the Prophet, and the manner in which he received them, he being present on several occasions of the kind. Declared that sometimes Joseph used a seer stone when enquiring of the Lord, and receiving revelation, but that he was so thoroughly endowed with the inspiration of the Almighty and the spirit of revelation that he oftener received them without any instrument, or other means than the operation of the spirit upon his mind. Referred to the testimony, which he received of the truth of the great latter-day work while as yet a boy. Testified that these things were not matters of belief only with him, but of actual knowledge. He explained the circumstances connected with the coming forth of the revelation on plural or celestial marriage. Refuted the statement and belief of those present that Brigham Young was the author of that revelation; showed that Joseph Smith the Prophet, had not only commenced the practice of that principle himself, and taught it to others, before President Young and the Twelve had returned from their missions in Europe in 1841, but that Joseph actually received revelation upon that principle as early as 1831. Said, 'Lyman Johnson, who was very familiar with Joseph at this early date, Joseph living at his father's house, and who was also very intimate with me, we having travelled on several missions together, told me himself that Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831, that plural marriage was a correct principle. Joseph declared to Lyman that God had revealed it to him, but that the time had not come to teach or practise it in the Church, but that the time would come.' To this statement Elder Pratt bore his testimony. He cited several instances of Joseph's having had wives sealed to him, one at least as early as April 5th, 1841, which was some time prior to the return of the Twelve from England. Referred to his own trial in regard to this matter in Nauvoo, and said it was because he got his information from a wicked source, from those disaffected, but as soon as he learned the truth he was satisfied.

Elder Joseph F. Smith then bore testimony and the meeting dismissed. The congregation, not large, immediately entering upon a free and easy discussion of these matters among themselves.

From Plano we visited Kirtland, taking our tickets via Cleveland to Willoughby from Chicago. Kirtland is three miles from Willoughby, in a south-easterly direction. We passed through the Temple which is now claimed by the 'Reorganized Church' and used by them as a meeting house. Many of the windows are broken by boys throwing stones at them, the plastering on the walls and ceilings, and the woodwork inside are considerably marred and dilapidated. The pulpits on the first floor in the east end are just as they were left at completion, except that they have been re-lettered. The lower stand on the west end, same floor, is removed to the raised platform on which stands a speaking desk and Bible, and is used for speaking at their meetings. As a very ac-

curate description of the Temple was recently published in the News from the pen of O. F. Whitney, there is no need of repeating it here. We noticed the house of Bishop Whitney, the store building of Whitney & Gilbert, the house where Joseph lived when he received the Word of Wisdom and many other revelations, also the house where he subsequently lived up to the time he left Kirtland. Father Johnson's tavern, the 'Church Store,' the places of residence of Sidney Rigdon, Father Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Lyman and Luke Johnson and many others, many of which have been repainted and are kept, so far as outward appearance, in good repair. We called upon Rebecca Dayton, step-mother of Hiram Dayton, of Utah, far advanced in years and feeble. She is the keeper of the keys of the Temple, as she lives near it. James McDowell, an old Pittsburgh 'Mormon' is the authorized keeper of the House; he lives some distance away, on the other side of the 'flats.' He showed us about the building, being very careful to impress our minds with the fact that he had no connection whatever to the 'Brighamites,' or 'Salt Lake Mormons.' He was greatly surprised when he learned a few moments later our names and standing. He wanted to shake hands though, and said he respected us for the sake of connections and former faithfulness. We also called on Mrs. Electa Stratton, who has resided in Kirtland ever since the departure of the Saints. These old ladies vividly remembered the history of early times in Kirtland, and answered many inquiries relative to the former locations of certain families. Mrs. Dayton waited upon the wife of Hyrum Smith, during her last confinement, until her death, and referred to her former associations with the family in affectionate terms. They still cling to their early faith in 'Mormonism,' and were especially pleased at once more meeting Elder Pratt, whom they well remembered.

After visiting Kirtland and after carefully enquiring the mind of the spirit, we concluded, while so near, to visit the Hill Cumorah, neither of us ever having been there. We therefore proceeded to Buffalo, a half day's ride on the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern R. R., and from thence by New York Central, a little over two hours ride via Rochester to Palmyra, a very pretty little town of about 3,000 inhabitants, with one Catholic and four Protestant Churches, and about three and a half or four miles almost directly north of Cumorah. The little town of Manchester is about three miles south of the hill on the Canandaigua road, and is a pretty place of perhaps between 1,000 and 2,000 inhabitants. The north end of the hill rises abruptly to the height of about 200 feet, and is plowed on the north end and east side nearly to the summit, which is very narrow for some distance along the ridge, on and near the highest points not over six or eight feet across. Here stand seven large trees, that seem to have escaped the destruction of the forest that once covered this part of the hill. The west side is rocky, and only plowed about half way up, the plowed ground mostly seeded to clover. About 100 yards south of the highest point the top begins to widen out and slope off to the south, from this point begins a forest with beautiful groves of hickory, elm, beach, and other kinds of wood which extend to the base on the west side, and nearly to the base on the east, and about a quarter of a mile south. In this timber the top of the hill is quite flat, covered with thick underbrush and blackberry briar. South of the timber the hill becomes rounding and gradually declines southward for about two miles into the common level, all of which is under cultivation from base to summit.

In a beautiful little grove on this memorable hill, we bowed in humble and fervent prayer, rendering praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God for the treasures of knowledge and truth so long concealed beneath its surface, to be brought forth by the gift and power of God to us and the world in this dispensation. The spirit of prayer, of blessing and prophecy rested upon us so that we rejoiced exceedingly. After prayers we laid our hands upon and blessed each other, giving utterance as the Spirit dictated. We spent several hours looking over the hill, viewing the surround-

ing country, in meditation, prayer and thanksgiving. After which we drove to the little town of Manchester, and returned to Palmyra, rejoicing and feeling that we had not spent our time in vain. We cut a few sticks from near the summit of the hill, which we brought with us as mementoes of our visit.

From Palmyra we came to this city (New York) about 14 hours ride by the New York Central and Hudson R. R. Here we met Elder W. C. Staines in good health and spirits. We also met Bishop John Sharp. Through the instrumentality of these brethren, Elder Smith arranged for his passage home.

With affectionate regard, and prayers for the continued prosperity of Zion. We are your brethren in the gospel of peace.

ORSON PRATT, SEN.,  
JOSEPH F. SMITH.

## Correspondence.

KANAB, Nov. 4, 1878.

President John Taylor:

Dear Brother—On Wednesday, Oct. 23, President Snow and party left the Saints at Sunset saw mill, with their blessing, and drove six miles through the timber to the north-west, where our vision extended over a most beautiful valley, some four by three and a half miles; a flat bottom covered with luxuriant grass—we drive around on the south and west sides, to avoid a marshy lake on the north of centre, formed from the springs, six in number, which have been secured by the people of Sunset and Brigham cities, who have established a dairy on the north end of the valley where, during the summer, since June 1st, five families have taken care of 115 cows, making butter and cheese, and now some 75 head are in use. They have made 5,400 pounds of cheese, and 442 pounds of butter; have on hand 99 cheeses weighing from 24 to 82 pounds each. These five families have also built three good dwelling houses 16 x 16 feet, milk and press house, 46 x 16 feet, cheese house 16 x 18 feet, dining hall 32 x 16 feet, also corral pens, &c., for immediate use. This place is known as Pleasant Valley; the north, west, and south sides are skirted with timber, and on the east by a volcano ridge, clear of timber but covered with grass. Brother Orville Bates has charge. At 2.30 p. m. meeting convened, when after singing and prayer, Elders Oliphant, J. N. Smith, Nuttall, Hinkley and Prest. Snow addressed the Saints. Prest. Snow quoted several passages of Scripture and referred to the parable of the ten virgins, applied this to the Latter-day Saints, and not to the world generally; gave his views in regard to the United Order, which is summed up in the saying of Jesus, 'Love the Lord with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself.' Those who can do this have the United Order in them; at the same time the gospel teaches us that every man, woman and child should labor to sustain themselves or all in their power to do so. Benediction by Elder Noble. In the evening, conversed as to the propriety of opening a new road from this place, direct to the Grand Falls on the Little Colorado. Bro. Hubert Burk having been over the county on horseback, proposed to accompany the party.

October 24th, started at 9.20 a.m. and drove around the north end of the valley and over a ridge and a succession of small valleys, where in portions of the year the water settles, being good for grazing. Around the edges of these valleys there are evidences that farming has been done at some time. In seven miles we strike a small lake, then one mile to Pine Cañon, which we travel down three miles, then on to cedar ridge and passed through the cedars and pines seven miles, then through a strip of dead timber four miles to dry camp. Today we passed and examined some ancient ruins. A good route for road thus far, with very little labor, in cutting down and trimming a few more trees. San Francisco Peak about 15 miles west of our camp. Bros. Hubert Burke and Warren R. Tenney and son have been with us to-day and labored efficiently in chopping down trees and moving others.

October 25th, passed through the cedars again, seven miles to San Francisco wash; found good water in a tank about 50 yards above where we entered the wash, which